

VIVISECTION AND ABSOLUTE VALUES

I should like to describe two pieces of specialised laboratory apparatus. The first is called the Blalock Press. Its purpose is to produce experimental shock in dogs by crushing the limbs without breaking the bones. The hind legs are clamped into the press which exerts a pressure of up to 5,000 pounds per square inch. After some hours the flesh is reduced to a pulp while the bones remain whole. One group of researchers crushed four hundred dogs by this method. Most died in extreme pain within five to twelve hours. Some survived up to twenty-four hours. None was given any sedation.

The second machine is the Noble-Coffin drum. It is designed to produce traumatic shock in guinea-pigs, hamsters and other small animals. They are placed in the drum with feet taped together, unanaesthetised; the drum is then turned by an electric motor. The interior is then fitted with small projections, so that at each revolution the animal is carried to the top of the drum and dropped. In one experiment, the animals were "drummed" to death, observations being taken at every hundred revolutions. Injuries included fractured skulls, bruised livers and engorgement of the bowels, lungs, kidneys and stomach. The term "to drum" in this sense has passed into the language of biomedical research.

Each of these machines is an expensive and sophisticated piece of equipment. No department is likely to invest in one unless it is to be used extensively over a period of years. They are not the only devices of the sort, nor even the worst, but they do serve to indicate the nature of the cold

matter-of-fact atrocities which are performed every day by scientists who in private life are, for the most part ordinary, kindly, respectable people.

Nor is there any reason for such experiments to stop at animals. Most of us have heard accounts of the hideous medical experiments practised on human beings under the Nazi regime. What is usually comfortably overlooked is that the practitioners were not, for the most part, sadists, neither were they politically motivated. Most of them had held eminent medical positions long before the National Socialists came to power. They justified their conduct by exactly the same arguments as the vivisectionists; the suffering of a few experimental victims was far outweighed by the widespread relief of suffering which could be brought about by the medical discoveries which resulted. Logically the argument is incontestable. There is no reason to suppose it will not prevail in the future - particularly under political systems where the collective is valued above the individual. There is no reason to suppose that it does not prevail at present in some places. The cozy myth that the Nazis were the only really wicked people to walk the earth (at least in our enlightened century!) is largely due to the fact that there were powerful vested interests in exposing the crimes of that regime, whereas in most cases the powerful interests lay on the side of keeping them hushed up.

What guarantee can we have against a future of unparalleled cruelty? At the moment there are residual feelings of respect for the human being which prevent brutality from becoming public policy; but why should we expect them to last? There was a time when public opinion would have revolted against vivisection or the battery system, but it

has been moulded into shape by propaganda and the bogus "authority" of science. There is no absolute morality. Any atrocity can be justified by sophisticated arguments and sentimental appeals to "the greater good".

There is only one defence against evil, and that is an absolute standard which can state that evil is evil; not merely on the shifting grounds of human sentiment, but according to an eternal and Divine law. A society which sees nothing beyond the physical world will always be brutal. It can torture without compunction, because it fears no higher justice beyond this world. Because it sees nothing beyond this life it will scrabble in the slime of depraved cruelty in order to find ways of prolonging that life for a few more miserable years. Blind to all but the grossest physical effects, it does not see that the massive practice of cruelty (100,000 animals per week die in experiments in this country alone, 85% of which are conducted without anaesthetic at any stage) is releasing a spiritual poison which must pervade the psychic atmosphere at every level; and that the seed of cruelty, once sown, must sooner or later spawn a hideous harvest.

Once we can see beyond this world, we can begin to face the hard realities of life: that human life, at the best of times, is short. That no human life is ever "saved", only prolonged a little; and that what happens to a person beyond this life is a direct result of the way she acts while she is in it. Once we realise this, we will know that it is not the length or quantity of life that is important, but the depth or quality. Seeing life in its true perspective, we will give up the abject and cowardly dictum that "no price is too high for saving lives", and realise that dragging our souls into the

mire of cruelty is one example of a price that is far to high. Life has a purpose; a spiritual purpose that lies far beyond this ~~ifexitself~~ earthly life itself. The fanatical passion for preserving life for its own sake at whatever costs comes from forgetting this. And so long as it is forgotten, we can expect to live in a society which is ultimatley prepared to perpetrate any kind of cruelty in the name of ~~practical~~ "practical" necessities of life, or even in the name of luxuries and pleasures which have become the onlu goal of profane life.

It is true that cruelties have been perpetrated in the name of religion; but it is also true that religion has been degenerating into materialism for a great many centuries. The world's original religion was purely spiritual; God revealed Herself in feminine form and the whole way of life (for it was far more than just a ~~religion~~ "religion" in the limited modern sense) was imbued with the qualities of love and compassion for all creatures. With masculine religion and the supplanting of the old priestess-queens by warrior kings, the slide into materialism became inevitable, as did the orgy of cruelty which has dogged patriarchy from the Roman (often lit by human torches), through the Inquisition, to the present.

Archeological records show matriarchal societies which lasted for thousands of years, vegetarian, ruled by priestess-queens and pervaded by the love and worship of God the Mother. Millenia passed without war or violence. Three things made this possible: divine love, a knowledge of immaneth justive ("I can do no harm to another creature which will not rebound on my own head in the fullness of time"); and an understanding of absolute values, far beyond the slippery arguments of human convenience. For a Madian, ancient or modern,

there can be no quibbles about whether a particular factory farming technique is cruel or not: to treat animals in such a way is out of Harmony, against nature, "anathemis". Divine Law is absolute, and no human sophistries can weigh against it. This is the only guarantee against evil. Once morality becomes a merely relative matter, an atrocity is possible and most are probable.

The immense prestige of the "science" which perpetrates these evils is directly due to ignorance of the real nature of things. The ultimate truth about the material universe lies in its spiritual meaning and purpose. When we have lost this metaphysical knowledge we are all too ready to take merely physical descriptions of the mechanics of the universe as a substitute for Absolute Truth. The scientist-materialist world-view in turn reinforces the error that the physical world is all there is, that there is no super-material justice, that life must be preserved at all costs, etc. It is a vicious circle. The only way to break it is by a return to the primordial Truth.